

INFORMATION ABOUT:

Recreation on Public Lands in Wyoming



U.S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

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The Bureau of Land Management takes care of 17.8 million acres of your public lands in Wyoming. These lands are available for many forms of outdoor recreation.

What is Possible?

Just about anything the recreationist can think of, if it has to do with the outdoors. Public lands in Wyoming have the potential for a wide range of recreational uses including hunting, fishing, camping, picnicking, rockhounding, photography, canoeing and just plain relaxing.

What is Wyoming Like?

The varied landscapes include forested mountains, deserts, rolling foothills, grasslands, rivers and lakes. Wyoming's unique geological formations include sand dunes, badlands, granitic domes, deeply-eroded canyons, buttes, caves and meandering rivers.

The Historic West

Archeological and historic sites abound. Approximately 345 miles of the Oregon/Mormon Trails cross public lands—two of the most important routes associated with exploration and settlement of the West. Other trails include the California, Pony Express, the Bozeman, and the Overland Trail. Evidence of ancient cultures is found at numerous sites and is protected by law, pending scientific analysis.

Following is a district by district summary of recreational possibilities in Wyoming. It is brief and therefore not complete.

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Located along one of the major tourist corridors to Yellowstone National Park is the Big Horn Basin. The Basin and its surrounding mountains (Bighorn, Absaroka Range, Beartooth and Pryor) offer a myriad of year-round recreational resources including two national forests, three wilderness areas, badlands, rivers and canyons.

Along the slopes of the Bighorn and Absaroka mountains are spectacular, carved canyons offering outstanding big game hunting, fishing, camping, hiking and sight-seeing opportunities. In addition, there are more than 30 caves in the area comprising the most extensive cave system west of South Dakota. These caves are extensive in terms of their formations, passages, and paleontological resources.

Meandering through the Basin's badlands are three major river systems - the Big Horn, Shoshone and Clark's Fork. These rivers offer outstanding opportunities for fishing, hunting, and float boating.

At the north end of the Basin is Cody, named after Buffalo Bill, which boasts an impressive western museum. Also located in the northern Basin is Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range. At the south end of the Basin is Thermopolis with its extensive hot springs and the Wind River Canyon noted for its impressive display of layered geologic formations uptilted to show ages from the ancient Precambrian (600 million years old) to the "modern" Chugwater formation (180 million years old).

Rawlins Field Office

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The North Platte River from the Colorado/Wyoming border to the Seminole Reservoir offers exceptional boating. As it winds its way through BLM land, the North Platte is primarily suitable for canoes, john boats and drift boats. There are several access points from which boaters can launch their craft. Some of these are highly developed BLM recreation sites such as the Bennett Mountain Recreation Site, and others are public fishing access easements obtained from private landowners by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Other boating opportunities are available on the many reservoirs in the Rawlins Field Office area. Seminole Reservoir, managed by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Wyoming Division of Parks and Cultural Resources, offers excellent power boating. Smaller reservoirs, such as Teton reservoir and East Allen reservoir, are suited to smaller craft and rowboats.

Fishing and boating go hand-in-hand, so it is to be expected that the water bodies listed above also provide excellent fishing. In fact, a lot of our visitors consider the opportunity to float a river secondary to hooking a large rainbow or brown trout in its waters. The North Platte is a prime rainbow trout stream that is nationally famous for its fishery. Also, the Sweetwater river offers excellent fishing, especially in the areas not readily accessible by vehicles.

Backpacking and Hiking - From the badlands of Adobe Town to the subalpine Ferris Mountains to the dramatic Sweetwater Rocks, one only needs to choose which ecosystem he or she would like to visit. Adobe Town, as its name implies, is a badlands area of buttes, mesas and canyons cut from an ancient sandstone formation. Visitors should use caution when traveling in Adobe Town - bring your own water, have good maps and know how to read them. The maze of canyons can easily confuse the novice hiker.

In contrast, the Ferris Mountains are heavily forested and reach elevations over 10,000 feet. The Madison Formation, a gigantic granite outcrop on the south side, is a spectacle not to be missed. With very little disturbance, big game hunting can be at its very best in the Ferris Mountains.

The phrase “totally unique” could be applied to the Sweetwater Rocks, another extensive granite formation. The Rocks encompass over 32,000 acres in which opportunities abound for technical rock climbing and not so technical rock scrambling. In either case, the rocks are a geologic anomaly which any visitor can enjoy.

Elk, mule deer, white-tail deer, bighorn sheep, antelope, coyote, bobcat and sage grouse are all here for the hunter. The Rawlins area is renown for its excellent antelope hunting, and people from all over the nation come to Rawlins specifically to hunt the pronghorn. As you are hunting, however, be aware of where you are and check with private landowners before you hunt on or cross private lands. We suggest hunters stop by the field offices to get the latest information concerning legal access.

For those who enjoy American history, it is worthwhile to note that the Oregon/Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail traverses Wyoming from east to west. In the Rawlins Field Office area, there are three developed interpretive sites that are adjacent to major highways and can be enjoyed by visitors who are just passing through. Independence Rock, a site administered by the Wyoming Division of Parks and Cultural Resources, is a large chunk of exposed granite which served as a “register” of the plains during the Oregon emigration. A few miles to the west the Devil’s Gate interpretive site. Devil’s Gate, named by pioneers for its foreboding features, is a 50-foot wide, 300-foot high cleft in solid rock through which the Sweetwater River flows. The next significant landmark for the pioneers was Split Rock. From a distance you can see the split in the rock which was used by pioneers to guide their way along the Sweetwater River. BLM has developed a small interpretive facility near Devil’s Gate and Split Rock which includes picnic facilities.

Rock Springs Field Office

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Recreational opportunities abound in the Rock Springs Field Office area of southwestern Wyoming. Some favorite recreational pursuits are camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, off-road vehicle use, rockhounding, viewing prehistoric and historic sites, and cross-country skiing in the winter.

Camping is available throughout the Rock Springs Field Office area. While most areas of the public lands are open to primitive camping, the BLM does manage a number of developed and semideveloped campgrounds throughout the area .

Off-road vehicle use is extremely popular in southwest Wyoming. The BLM established an area of 13,000 acres for ORV recreation use in the Killpecker Sand Dunes, north of Rock Springs. In most other areas, off-road use is limited to existing roads and trails.

For the history buff, the Rock Springs Field Office area contains numerous petroglyph sites and historic trails. The petroglyphs are carvings incised on sandstone cliffs by ancient Indian cultures. Historic trails crossing the district include the Oregon/Mormon Pioneer, California, Overland, and Pony Express as well as numerous cutoffs and historic sites associated with these trails.

Casper Field Office
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The Casper Field Office area offers diverse opportunities for several types of recreation including hunting, fishing, camping, ORV use, sight-seeing, and wildlife observation.

The southern Bighorn Mountains offer opportunities for fishing and hunting as well as sight-seeing and primitive camping. Winter sports include snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. The Middle Fork Recreation Management Area, in the southern Bighorn Mountains, covers some 40,000 acres and contain a variety of outstanding natural resources. Wildlife includes elk, mule deer, white-tail deer, pronghorn, sage grouse, small mammals and many song birds. Several streams are available for fishing including the Middle Fork of the Powder River, rated a Class 1 trout fishery. The Red Wall and the famous Hole-in-the-Wall and Outlaw Cave are outstanding natural landmarks related to the history of the area.

The Powder River Breaks in eastern Johnson County is nationally known for big game hunting. Mule deer and antelope are available as well as primitive camping.

The Dry Creek Petrified Tree Environmental Education Area near Buffalo is an outstanding natural area. Interpretive sign and trails are being developed.

Goldeneye Wildlife and Recreation Area, 25 miles west of Casper, is a 488 acre reservoir stocked with trout. Waterfowl and shore birds are abundant especially during migration periods. Facilities include parking areas, boat ramp, and toilet.

The Oregon/Mormon Trail crosses the Casper Field Office area, and a recently completed management plan will lead to development of new interpretive sites. Currently, the only well developed sites are Fort Laramie, managed by the National Park Service, and Bessemer Bend on the North Platte River. Facilities at Bessemer Bend include vault toilet, picnic tables, and a ramada containing interpretive panels. Fishing is available in the North Platte River.

The Trapper Route canoe trail consist of five sites along the North Platte River between Alcova and Casper. Each provides canoe launch sites and parking areas making canoeing and fishing on the North Platte River accessible to the public.

Public lands throughout the Casper Field Office area are available for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, or other outdoor activities where access exists.